

## EDITOR'S CONFERENCE REPORT

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IAMSLIC met for its 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Mystic, Connecticut, 5-9 October, 2003. In attendance were more than 100 people from 16 countries, among them attendees from 20 U.S. States. The largest number came from Massachusetts, followed by California, Connecticut and Maryland. Others came from Argentina, Australia (Tasmania), Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ghana, Iceland, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, Senegal, Tanzania, and United Kingdom. Conference participants represented a mix of libraries, including one-person marine-station libraries in isolated locations, academic and institutional libraries in developing countries, libraries in large research institutions, and large academic libraries. Representatives from Cambridge Scientific Abstracts and Elsevier also attended and gave presentations.

Under the general theme "Navigating the Shoals: Evolving User Services in Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries", following the opening reception on Sunday evening, there were three and a half days of contributed and invited papers, panel discussions, and brief oral summaries of posters on display, by librarians, research scientists, and database vendors. In his welcoming remarks, the Associate Vice Chancellor and Campus Director of the University of Connecticut at Avery Point, UConn's marine station, noted that UConn now has a maritime studies degree and a coastal studies degree.

In the session on Digital Libraries, there was a report from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography on digitizing historic oceanographic expedition content. A report on the MBL/WHOI Library Digital Herbarium noted that the Herbarium has 8000 specimens from 100 years of collecting, 1000 of them algae. MARC (HerbMARC) is being used to catalog herbarium specimens and the information on the herbarium labels. A report on the Integrated Taxonomic Information System described ITIS as a dynamic database which integrates research results of the world taxonomic community into a current coherent list of biological names, covering 28,000 plants and 130,000 animals, all linked to the Alexandria Digital Library Gazetteer. A report on Mystic Seaport's 19th Century Merchant Marine Digital Library included details of funding, scanning, and presentation. In a featured lecture, the Director of the Maritime Studies Program of Williams College and Mystic Seaport described this intensive, 17-week, cross-disciplinary program, which includes maritime history, oceanography/marine biology, and marine policy and history.

A session on Services to Geographically Dispersed Users described methods of networking and providing service to remote users at the Friday Harbor Laboratories; remote marine science research facilities of the University of North Carolina; remote

research facilities of the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research in Germany; and various isolated members of the Africa Regional Group of IAMSILIC.

A session on Technology-Based User Services included a report on the WWW-based union catalog of marine institutions participating in the ODINAFRICA project covering 21 countries in Africa. A report from the US National Agriculture Library's Water Quality Information Center described a website on water quality and agriculture developed from search engine and OPAC transaction logs to enhance user success in locating desired documents. A report from Oregon State University described a project to investigate interfaces that will lead users to useful web resources by using collaborative-filtering-recommendation technology that allows an information portal to learn continually which resources are likely to be useful to which users. Another report described the information services of the Everglades Information Network.

In a session at Avery Point, a report on copyright gave an overview of new developments in copyright law, and discussed PLOS and SPARC. Another report gave a detailed description and overview of the *UN Atlas of the Oceans*. The session on Current Research at Avery Point featured reports by research scientists on mercury contamination and cycling in the coastal zone, and coastal aquatic eutrophication. The lecture sessions were followed by a boat trip in Long Island Sound and a visit to the New London Ledge Lighthouse out in the Sound.

In the session on Enhancing User Services, a report on the use and management of information resources at Mazatlán noted that information technology needs to increase continually to handle the increase in information. A report on enhancing access to electronic publications in Tanzanian universities noted that despite the benefits of linking electronic publications to the Internet, use of the Internet by faculty remains very low. A report from Ghana focused on services provided to scientists by the Library of the Water Research Institute.

Representatives from Elsevier described new reference works they will bring up shortly, while representatives from Cambridge Scientific Abstracts described activities in response to user requests to improve linking and to create custom designed fields.

Panel discussions covered Teaching the Library Research Process, Web-based Virtual Reference, and IAMSILIC's Digital Architecture. Posters were presented on a variety of topics, including: challenges of automation; electronic subject guides; digital libraries; user requirements, products and services in a fisheries library; and the history of a regional environmental information center.

The annual banquet and local restaurants provided many opportunities to enjoy local seafood. As usual, the underlying themes of this conference were resource sharing and networking, and both were strengthened considerably during this time in Mystic. The next IAMSILIC Conference will be in September 2004 in Hobart, Tasmania.